



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
**Department of Toxic Substances Control**

## News Release

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Maziar Movassaghi, Acting Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Cal/EPA's Department of Toxic Substance Control Co-Hosts 'JUNK' Raft Event to Reduce Plastic Marine Debris**

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** - Cal/EPA's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) joined noted environmentalists, including the Algalita Marine Research Foundation and Heal The Bay near the state Capitol, to highlight the growing problem of marine debris and chemical pollution in our oceans. Part of the event included a huge "JUNK" Raft -- made from 15,000 empty plastic bottles and plastic which were discarded as ocean debris. It was sailed, by the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, from California to Hawaii last year to highlight how much plastic trash is in the Pacific Ocean.

"Preventing pollution is a large part of the solution," said DTSC's Dr. Jeff Wong. "As human health and environmental concerns become increasingly global, we take seriously our charge to assist in the protection of California's coastline and the Pacific Ocean, both of which are vital not only to the state's economy, but also to the quality of life people have always enjoyed here. At DTSC, we're looking at how we can take action by applying green chemistry and other vanguards to promote a healthy ocean environment."

"We cannot recycle or simply educate our way out of seas choking on plastic trash. Now is the time for legislation based upon California's Ocean Protection Council's policies. Clean seas will save money, create jobs and protect our environment," said Leslie Tamminen from Seventh Generation Advisors.

In some parts of the Pacific Ocean, garbage especially plastic waste, is gathering in huge patches or zones, one of which is believed to be twice the size of Texas. In this zone, called the "North Pacific Gyre garbage patch," there is evidence that marine birds, mammals and fish are being adversely affected.

"We are committed to research and restoration of the ocean by understanding the impact of plastic waste on marine ecosystems, from animal entanglement to pollutants hitching a ride on plastic waste that is swallowed by fish that we harvest for food" said Marcus Eriksen, Ph.D., director of education Algalita Marine Research foundation. "We must employ solutions that work. New ways to recover, redesign and reduce consumption are on the horizon. What is certain is that the "Throw Away" concept for plastic products must end."

Results from a 1999 Algalita study indicated plastic debris in the North Pacific Gyre garbage patch, even then, alarmingly outweighed ocean plankton. That ratio had doubled by 2008

“The harmful impacts to marine life, caused by contaminants from plastic debris and other chemicals such as flame retardants, are dramatic,” Dr. Wong added. “If unchecked, these problems can only escalate, and our call for action is immediate.”

DTSC has several projects to help protect our oceans. The department has provided training and technical assistance to auto repair shops, metal finishers and hospitals to reduce hazardous chemicals that can ultimately reach the ocean. Our scientists have also studied chemical contaminants in marine mammals, fish, birds, shellfish and sediments for decades. DTSC is currently involved in researching and testing new sustainable "bioplastics" that are non-toxic, and designed to degrade within a short time, to replace current plastics.

Click here to learn more about this exciting event  
<http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/algaita-event.cfm>

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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit [www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov). To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

***The mission of the Department of Toxic Substances Control is to protect public health, safety, and the environment from toxic harm.***